(c) Governemnt reiterates that the determination of India's security requirements, including the maintenance of a minimum credible numclear deterrent, is a sovereign responsibility and cannot be determined by anohter country. Government is prepared to work with the United States to move towards achieving genuine non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery and to this end remains committed to build upon the productive bilateral dialogue already underway.

Government's reaction on News captioned "Kashmir, most dangerous place in the World"

3585. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Hindustan Times on the 11th March, 2000 captioned Kashmir, most dangerous place in the world; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government is aware of the comments attributed to President Clinton on the situation in South Asia, including his description of the region as the most dangerous place in the world. India has demonstrated its resolve and capacity to safeguard its interests in a restrained and responsible manner. There is now a better appreciation by the United States of India's restraint in dealing with persistent provocation from Pakistan. Government has also conveyed to the international community, including the United States, that it must direct its concerns on tensions in South Asia to persuading Pakistan to abjure violence, terrorism and hostile propaganda against India and respect the bilateral agreements it has solemnly entered into. Government is committed to resolving all problems with our neighbours through peaceful bilateral dialogue.

Conflicts between India and Pakistan

3586. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Pakistan's Foreign Minister has

stated that Pakistan and India are heading for a conflict and that great dangers are seen in future, as stated in the Indian Express dated 14th March, 2000; and

(b) if so, Government's reactions thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Government have seen the report appearing in the Indian Express on 14th March, 2000. Such propagandist statements by Pakistani leaders are designed to deflect the increasing concern being expresed by the internatinal community about Pakistan's continued role in the sponsorship of cross-border terrorism in the State of Jammu & Kashmir and elsewhere in India. They are also meant to attract international attention so as to seek third party involvement, for which there is no place in India-Pakistan relations.

While Government will continue to scrupulously maintain its policy of restraint, it will effectively respond, as it has demonstrated in the past, to any threat to our territorial integrity.

Improving Standard in Engineering Colleges

3587. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Advisory Committee on Information Technology has recommended to improve the standard of 43 Engineering Colleges to the level of the Indian Institute of Technology; and

(b) if so, the steps taken to create an Information Technology education fund for this purpose and also for giving high quality education to students qualified in entrance test?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Ministry of Information Technology has suggested to the Ministry of Human Resource Development to set up a Core Group to study all aspects of upgrading the 43 engineering colleges which have been identified for this purpose.